



Lambda Letters Project

September, 1993 Newsletter

6212 Silvertown Way, Carmichael, California 95608

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Opinion-Editorial

32552

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Issue

Blood, Sweat, and Tears

I'd like to share my view of what lead to our temporary defeat on the subject of ending the military's policy of discrimination against lesbians, gays, and bisexuals.

First it's worth noting several things:

- * Bill Clinton surrendered under fire. Rightly or wrongly he determined that he had more to lose by staying with us than giving up.*
- * Even our long-time friend Ron Dellums, Chair of the House Armed Services Committee, abandoned plans for hearings by his committee after complaints that the proposed witnesses were too biased in our favor.*
- * The opposition submitted an avalanche of letters and phone calls, far more than our community did.*
- * The most effective Congressional opponents of our position were powerful Democrats such as Senator Sam Nunn.*
- * The Congressional hearings that were held were grossly biased. Even the prestigious ex-Senator Barry Goldwater was refused permission to testify because he opposes the ban.*

So what does it all mean? First of all we need to elect open lesbians, gays, and bisexuals; people who care enough about our issues not to abandon us when the going gets tough. Having our own in office also increases the chance of a fair hearing for our issues.

Continued on p. 5

In this issue:

D.C.'s Domestic Partners Ordinance	1, 5
Needle Exchange Bill	2
Spousal Rape Bill	2
Congressional Analysis: Good & Bad	3
Women's Health Equity Act	4

Support Washington D.C.'s Domestic Partners Ordinance

Please write to the member of Congress shown on the enclosed sample letter. Ask him or her to approve domestic partner benefits for Washington D.C.'s lesbian, gay, bisexual, and unmarried heterosexual employees.

Washington D.C. passed legislation to provide these benefits. However, all such D.C. legislation must be approved by Congress before it becomes law. The issue came before Congress as an amendment to the D.C. Fiscal Year 1994 appropriations bill.

Both the House and the Senate amended the bill to eliminate the domestic partner benefits provisions in it. However, there were differences in the Senate and House versions of the bill and so it is now in a House/Senate Conference Committee to iron out the differences. The Committee will send a compromise version back to each house of Congress for a final vote. Members of Congress can vote down any compromise that eliminates domestic partner benefits. Our job is to persuade them to demand that domestic partner benefits be part of any legislation finally approved.

Please remind your Representative that employers provide health insurance to the spouses of their employees because it improves employee productivity. When their families have good health care, the employees take less time off to care for their families. They have greater peace of mind and can concentrate on their jobs better. This is

Continued on p. 5

Needle Exchange Bill Reaches Governor's Desk for Second Year in a Row

For at least two years in a row, Assembly Speaker Willie Brown and Senator Dianne Watson have introduced legislative bills which would allow the State Department of Health Services to authorize—by local request—pilot needle exchange programs as one way to stop the spread of HIV. Last year, both bills passed the legislature and were vetoed by Governor Wilson. This year, Speaker Brown's bill passed (the two bills were virtually identical) and we are again urging the Governor to sign it.

This bill allows local jurisdiction to request authorization from the State Department of Health Services to participate in three-year clean needle exchange programs. These projects allow one-to-one exchange of needles and syringes. They require not only local community and law enforcement involvement but also that each pilot project be part of a comprehensive HIV-prevention program linked to anonymous HIV testing, counseling, partner notification, and early intervention programs.

Why Do We Need AB 260?

California is only one of ten states that makes it a crime to furnish needles without a prescription, and one of seven that does not waive this prohibition within the context of an HIV-prevention program. Prevention Point, a successful needle exchange program in San Francisco since 1988, exchanges more than 20,000 needles a week. Since a clean needle is provided only if a dirty needle is returned, the total number of needles available on the street does not increase. Successful needle exchange programs have lessened the spread of HIV in other states and countries.

Continued on p. 3

Spousal Rape Bill

Assemblyperson Hilda Solis has introduced AB 187, the Spousal Rape Bill, which eliminates most of the legal distinction between marital rape and nonmarital rape. This measure is important because spousal rape and rape committed by anyone else are equally egregious crimes. Rape is rape whether it is committed by a spouse, an acquaintance, or a stranger—and there should be no difference in the definition of the crime or the penalties imposed.

Diana Russell, in her landmark study, *Rape in Marriage*, reported the immensity of the problem. She estimated that one in seven women who have ever been married are raped by husbands or ex-husbands. Furthermore, in one-third of these relationships, the rape was repeated 2–20 times, and in another third, the wives were raped over 20 times.

Researchers estimate that 84 percent of all rapes go unreported because the survivors fear they will not be believed, reporting will be futile, and they will be revictimized by the system.

Continued on p. 4

Event Update

Pool Party a Great Success!

Art and Jeff of Fair Oaks hosted a fundraiser pool party at their home on Sunday, August 22nd. The party was a benefit for the Lambda Letters Project. Many people attended and a number of Sacramento-area businesses contributed towards the costs of the party. Almost \$800 was raised at this event.

At the end of this newsletter, you will find advertisements for the businesses that contributed towards the costs of the party. We urge you to support them. Tell them you appreciate their support of Lambda Letters Project!

Renewed Support for Surgeon General Designee Jocelyn Elders

Approval of the nomination of Dr. Jocelyn Elders as Surgeon General of the United States will be the first item of business when the U.S. Senate reconvenes September 7th. Unfortunately, Dr. Elders' nomination is being threatened by conservatives who are sex-phobic, anti-Clinton, and maybe just plain mean-spirited. Because of this, Lambda Letters again wrote on behalf of our members to Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein, repeating our support of Dr. Elders and asking that the senators use their influence to convince wavering colleagues to vote for her. By the time you receive this newsletter, we hope that Dr. Elders will have been confirmed.

Needle Exchange

Continued from p. 2

The new Federal administration recognizes that we must look at needle exchange from the standpoint of both law enforcement and HIV education (it used to be "just say no" to everything). Thus, there is hope for movement on that level; but we also need changes at the state level. Please sign the enclosed letter to encourage Gov. Wilson to sign the Needle Exchange Bill!

Good News, Bad News

Last month several hundred of you signed letters in support of Assembly Joint Resolution 1 in which the California Legislature urges Congress to pass the Equal Rights Amendment. Congressmember Don Edwards of California has introduced House Joint Resolution (HJR) 1 to do just that. At present this bill has 69 cosponsors—63 Democrats and 6 Republicans. Twelve Congressmembers from California are cosponsors of HJR 1. All are Democrats. They are Anthony Beilenson, Howard Berman, Gary Condit, Ron Dellums, Calvin Dooley, Vic Fazio, Bob Filner, Tom Lantos, Robert Matsui, Norman Mineta, Pete Stark, and Lynn Woolsey. Is your Congressman on this list?

HR 667 was introduced in the House of Representatives by California's very own Robert K. Dornan. This bill would make the military's policy of discrimination against lesbians, gays, and bisexuals (the policy in place before this year) the law of the land. HR 667 has 105 cosponsors—97 Republicans and 8 Democrats. Fourteen of the cosponsors are from California. All are Republicans. They are Bill Baker, Randy Cunningham, John Doolittle, Elton Gallegly, Wally Herger, Duncan Hunter, Jay Kim, Al McCandless, Howard McKeon, Carlos Moorhead, Ron Packard, Richard Pombo, Dana Rohrabacher, and Edward Royce. Is your Congressman on *this* list?

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Women's Health Equity Act

Representatives Pat Schroeder and Olympia Snowe have introduced the 1993 Women's Health Care Equity Act. This legislation, which is a multi-bill package, would address the previously underserved health care needs of women.

Women's health care needs have long been ignored. As a result, incidents of breast cancer have risen at an alarming rate, the number of women with AIDS continues to grow, and other diseases known mostly to women have yet to be adequately researched. In a recent report, it was estimated that only 13 cents out of every dollar spent on health care research is allocated for research of specific interest to women. Often when research is done on non-gender specific diseases, such as heart disease, lung cancer, etc., most of the subjects used in the research are men. Thus, treatment and prevention strategies are defined for both men and women from research done exclusively on men. Better health promotion programs

for women and an increase in research dollars spent on women's health concerns are urgently needed.

Some of the specifics of the bill package include the permanent establishment of the Office of Research on Women's Health within the National Institutes of Health; inclusion of women and people of color in all clinical trials; and additional research and increased funding for women's mental health, substance abuse, breast cancer, contraception and infertility, AIDS, ovarian cancer, and osteoporosis and related disorders.

This month's letter is addressed to your legislator. Please sign it so that we can persuade our representatives to pass this important 1993 Women's Health Care Equity Act.

Spousal Rape

Continued from p. 2

Women who have been raped by their spouses are even less likely to report the rape for the reasons listed above, and also because law enforcement personnel and society at large still believe that within marriage there is presumed consent to sexual intercourse under any circumstance. Current law perpetuates this myth by limiting the scope of the spousal rape crime, and by making it a mere misdemeanor.

Please encourage Governor Wilson in the enclosed letter to pass this long-overdue legislation. Passage of AB 187 will equalize the treatment of marital and nonmarital rape—and show Californians that spousal rape is unacceptable.

Entertainment 94 Sellers Needed

Lambda Letters needs people to sell Entertainment '94 Books in their community. Books are available for many communities across the state. We will pay you \$1.00 for each book that you sell or will give you a free book if you sell 11 books. We need to sell 300 books statewide to provide needed financial support to the Lambda Letters Project. If you are interested, please let us know by mail or by calling (916) 965-6851.

Do You Know Who Your Legislators Are?

A viable democracy requires an informed electorate. If you would like the names, addresses, and phone numbers of your legislators and other elected officials, send a request along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to:

**The Lambda Letters Project
6212 Silverton Way
Carmichael, CA 95608**

We would be happy to furnish you with their names!

Blood, Sweat, Tears

Continued from page 1

We also need to abandon strict party loyalties. Goldwater, a conservative Republican, supports us while our Democratic friends abandoned us. A politician who thinks he or she is our only choice can easily ignore our needs whenever it seems expedient to do so. Until we truly demand payment in return for our support, we'll get only what they choose to give. Conversely, we must give immense support to those who do support us.

Obviously we need much better organization to provide the volume of constituent input, letters, and phone calls, as well as other lobbying to turn the tide in our favor. This requires a hard look at the organizations now leading our community. How should they be improved, which should be merged to avoid wasteful duplication, and which should be retired with honors? We also need to attract the best and the brightest to run our organizations.

Building better coalitions with other communities is very important also. This year the national leadership of the NAACP went out on a limb by calling for an end to sexual-orientation-based discrimination in the military. They took a lot of heat from NAACP members for doing so. We need to get more groups to support us on our issues. This means supporting them on their issues whenever possible.

During World War II, Winston Churchill told his people he could offer them nothing but blood, sweat, and tears if they were to defeat the Nazis. Well folks, it's our turn. To defeat the forces of darkness in our own land we must volunteer our services and our dollars as never before. The most efficiently designed organizations can do nothing unless they have the dollars and the workers to do it. Hard work and hard cash are essential ingredients to a winning effort. The opposition won't give us an easy victory.

Think about it. What can you do to make this a better world for all of us?

Boyce Hinman

Cofounder of Lambda Letters Project



Domestic Partners

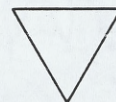
Continued from page 1

just as true for lesbian, gay, and bisexual employees. The City of Washington, as an employer, will benefit from this legislation.

The principle of equal pay for equal work demands that domestic partner benefits for D.C. employees be approved. Health insurance is very expensive. If the city provides this coverage to the families of heterosexual married employees, but denies it to the families of other employees, it is violating that principle.

Domestic partner benefits do not encourage gay relationships or discourage heterosexual marriages. The breakdown of the traditional family long predates the concept of domestic partner benefits and has nothing to do with that subject. Eliminating these benefits will hurt the families of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals but it will not persuade them to enter heterosexual marriages. Forcing sexual minorities into such relationships would be harmful to them and would create unnecessary heartache to their spouses and any children resulting from those unions. Society should deal with the breakdown of the traditional family by finding and dealing with its root causes, not by punishing sexual minorities.

Please urge your Representative to persuade the House Senate Conference Committee to restore Washington D.C.'s domestic partner benefits to the D.C. Fiscal Year 1994 appropriations bill. Ask him or her to reject any compromise that does not include those benefits.



Letter Processors Needed

Sacramento-area residents needed to open and count signed letters returned to the Lambda Letters Project. Must be willing to track those who return letters each month, and put letters in envelopes addressed to legislators.
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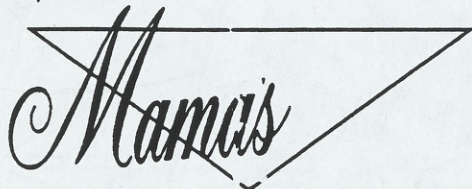
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